Influence of Digital and Store-Based Visual Merchandising on Purchase Behaviour: A Study of Homemakers in the Navsari Region

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Abstract:

Visual merchandising (VM) has emerged as an important strategic mechanism for shaping consumer decision-making in both traditional retail stores and digital shopping environments. This study seeks to comparatively assess the effectiveness of digital and offline visual merchandising and examine their impact on the buying behaviour of homemakers in the Navsari region of Gujarat. Primary data were collected from 280 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using SPSS, employing reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, and an independent-samples t-test. The findings reveal that offline visual merchandising exerts a comparatively greater overall influence, particularly with regard to consumer trust and purchase decisions, while digital visual merchandising provides greater convenience to consumers. The study concludes that digital and offline visual merchandising should not be viewed as competing approaches but as complementary components of the retail experience. Accordingly, an integrated omni-channel visual merchandising strategy is recommended to effectively address consumer needs across both physical and digital retail platforms.

1. Introduction:

In the modern retail landscape, visual merchandising has evolved from simply arranging and presenting merchandise to designing engaging and influential shopping experiences. Various components, including store layout, illumination, colour combinations, product presentation, and digital interface design, work together to influence how consumers perceive and evaluate products (Kerfoot et al., 2003).

The emergence of digital commerce has further transformed visual merchandising by shifting several traditional retail practices into virtual shopping spaces. Website design, quality of product visuals, interactive features, and the overall digital presentation have become significant factors in attracting consumers and shaping their purchase evaluations (Ha & Lennon, 2010). In semi-urban markets such as Navsari, homemakers constitute an important consumer segment and frequently participate in purchase-related decisions, particularly concerning everyday household requirements and lifestyle-oriented products.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of visual merchandising on the purchase behaviour of homemakers in the Navsari region.
2. To assess the impact of offline visual merchandising practices on consumers' purchase behaviour.

3. To evaluate the impact of digital visual merchandising practices on consumers' purchase behaviour.
4. To comparatively assess digital and offline visual merchandising with respect to their appeal, convenience, credibility, and influence on purchase decisions.
5. To assess respondents' preferences for digital and physical retail channels when making purchases..
6. To ascertain whether a significant difference exists in the impact of digital and offline visual merchandising on consumers' purchase behaviour.
7. To propose a coordinated visual merchandising framework that integrates digital and offline retail experiences in light of the study findings.

3. Literature Review

Existing literature highlights the strong relationship between visual stimuli and consumer behaviour. According to Kerfoot et al. (2003), effective visual merchandising enhances store image and encourages impulse buying. Pegler (2012) emphasized the role of display techniques in increasing product visibility and sales.

In the context of online retail, Ha and Lennon (2010) found that visual presentation significantly influences perceived risk and purchase intention. Similarly, Park et al. (2005) demonstrated that high-quality product images and interactive features improve online shopping experiences.

Recent studies suggest that offline environments provide sensory engagement, while online environments offer convenience and personalization (Grewal et al., 2017). However, comparative studies focusing on specific demographic groups such as household wives remain limited.

This indicates a research gap in comparative studies focusing on specific demographic groups such as household wives, providing the rationale for the present study in the Navsari region.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **descriptive and comparative research design**. The descriptive component facilitates a systematic understanding of consumer perceptions regarding visual merchandising, while the comparative aspect enables an evaluation of differences between Digital and offline visual merchandising practices and their respective influence on buying behaviour.

4.2 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study is based on a sample of **280 household wives** from the Navsari region of Gujarat. A **convenience sampling technique** was employed due to accessibility and feasibility considerations. This method allowed the researcher to collect data from respondents who were readily available and actively involved in household purchasing decisions.

4.3 Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** designed to capture respondents' perceptions of both Digital and offline visual merchandising elements. The questionnaire consisted of multiple sections, including demographic details, shopping behaviour, and evaluation of visual merchandising attributes measured on a Likert scale.

4.4 Data Analysis Tool

The collected data were coded and analysed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**. This software facilitated systematic data handling, statistical computation, and interpretation of results.

4.5 Statistical Techniques Used

To ensure robust analysis, the following statistical tools were applied:

- **Cronbach's Alpha**:
  Used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scale. A value above 0.7 was considered acceptable.
- **Descriptive Statistics**:
  Employed to summarize the data through measures such as mean and standard deviation, providing an overview of respondent perceptions.
- **Independent Sample t-test**:
  Conducted to examine whether a statistically significant difference exists between the impact of Digital and offline visual merchandising on consumer buying behaviour.

4.6 Variables of the Study

- **Independent Variables**:
  - Digital Visual Merchandising
  - Offline Visual Merchandising
- **Dependent Variable**:
  - Consumer Buying Behaviour

4.7 Hypothesis

- **H_0 (Null Hypothesis):**
  There is no significant difference between the influence of digital and offline visual merchandising on buying behaviour.

- **H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis):**

  There is a significant difference between the influence of digital and offline visual merchandising on buying behaviour.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	Items
0.842	8

Interpretation: The instrument demonstrates high internal consistency.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Offline VM	4.20	0.58
Digital VM	4.00	0.65

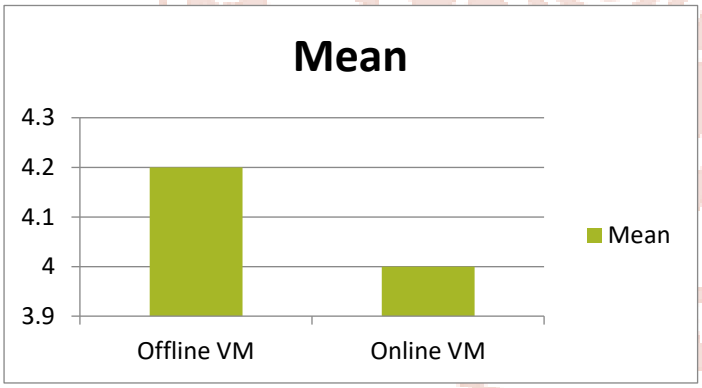
5.3 Independent Sample t-Test

t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.12	278	0.002

Interpretation: Since $p < 0.05$, a statistically significant difference exists.

6. Graphs and Their Interpretation

Graph 1: Bar Chart – Mean Comparison



Variables: Offline VM vs Digital VM

X-axis: Type of VM

Y-axis: Mean Score

Values:

- Offline VM = 4.20
- Digital VM = 4.00

Interpretation:

The bar chart indicates that offline visual merchandising has a marginally higher mean score compared to Digital visual merchandising, suggesting stronger influence on purchase

decisions. The bar chart presents a comparative analysis of the mean scores associated with Digital and offline visual merchandising, revealing that offline visual merchandising attains a marginally higher mean value. This difference, although not substantially large, is indicative of a relatively stronger influence of offline visual elements on consumer purchase decisions.

The higher mean score for offline visual merchandising may be attributed to the multisensory experience offered by physical retail environments. Elements such as store layout, lighting, product arrangement, and window displays create a tangible and immersive atmosphere that enhances consumer engagement. This sensory stimulation often fosters emotional connection, increases product evaluation confidence, and reduces perceived risk, thereby positively influencing purchase behaviour.

In contrast, while Digital visual merchandising relies heavily on digital interfaces such as high-resolution images, graphics, and videos, it lacks the physical interaction that many consumers associate with trust and product authenticity. Although online platforms provide convenience and accessibility, the absence of direct sensory experience may limit their persuasive effectiveness in certain purchase contexts.

Furthermore, the observed difference in mean scores aligns with consumer behaviour theories suggesting that environmental cues in physical retail settings play a critical role in shaping decision-making processes. The findings imply that household wives in the Navsari region may place greater reliance on physical inspection and experiential evaluation before making purchase decisions.

Overall, the bar chart not only highlights a numerical difference but also reflects the underlying behavioural preference for offline retail environments, emphasizing the continued relevance of traditional visual merchandising strategies even in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Graph 2: Pie Chart – Shopping Preference



Data:

- Offline = 57%
- Digital = 43%

Interpretation:

The pie chart demonstrates a higher preference for offline shopping among respondents, reflecting trust and physical interaction advantages. The pie chart illustrates the distribution of respondents' shopping preferences, indicating that 57% of the participants prefer offline shopping, whereas 43% favour Digital shopping. This distribution clearly reflects a higher inclination toward offline retail formats among household wives in the Navsari region.

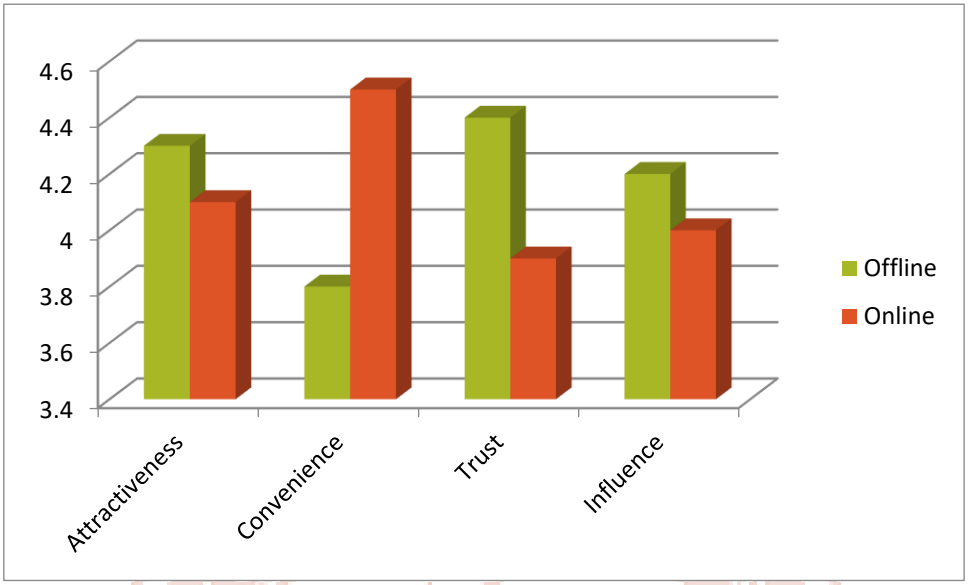
The predominance of offline shopping preference can be attributed to several underlying factors. Primarily, offline retail environments provide direct physical interaction with products, allowing consumers to assess attributes such as quality, texture, size, and overall suitability before making a purchase. This tangible evaluation reduces uncertainty and enhances confidence in decision-making.

Additionally, offline shopping environments foster a greater sense of trust and reliability, as consumers can engage with sales personnel, seek immediate clarification, and resolve queries in real time. The presence of well-organized store layouts, effective lighting, and appealing product displays further enhances the shopping experience, making it more engaging and reassuring.

On the other hand, although a substantial proportion of respondents (43%) prefer online shopping, likely due to its convenience, time-saving nature, and wide product availability, the slightly lower preference suggests that digital platforms may still face challenges related to perceived risk, lack of physical verification, and concerns over product authenticity.

Overall, the findings indicate that while Digital shopping is gaining acceptance, offline retail continues to maintain a dominant position, particularly among household wives, due to its ability to provide experiential value and build consumer trust. This highlights the continued importance of physical retail spaces in influencing purchase behaviour, even in an increasingly digital retail landscape.

Graph 3: Clustered Bar Chart – Factor Comparison



Variables:

- Attractiveness
- Convenience
- Trust
- Purchase Influence

Values:

Factor	Offline	Digital
Attractiveness	4.3	4.1
Convenience	3.8	4.5
Trust	4.4	3.9
Influence	4.2	4.0

Interpretation:

The clustered bar chart reveals that offline VM excels in trust and influence, whereas Digital VM performs better in convenience. The clustered bar chart provides a comparative representation of key dimensions of visual merchandising viz. attractiveness, convenience, trust, and purchase influence across Digital and offline retail formats. The mean scores indicate distinct strengths associated with each mode of merchandising.

Offline visual merchandising records higher mean values in terms of trust (4.4) and purchase influence (4.2), suggesting that physical retail environments are more effective in building consumer confidence and driving purchase decisions. This can be attributed to the tangible and experiential nature of offline shopping, where consumers are able to physically examine products, interact with store personnel, and experience environmental cues such as

lighting, layout, and product arrangement. These elements collectively enhance perceived reliability and reduce uncertainty, thereby strengthening trust and encouraging purchase behaviour.

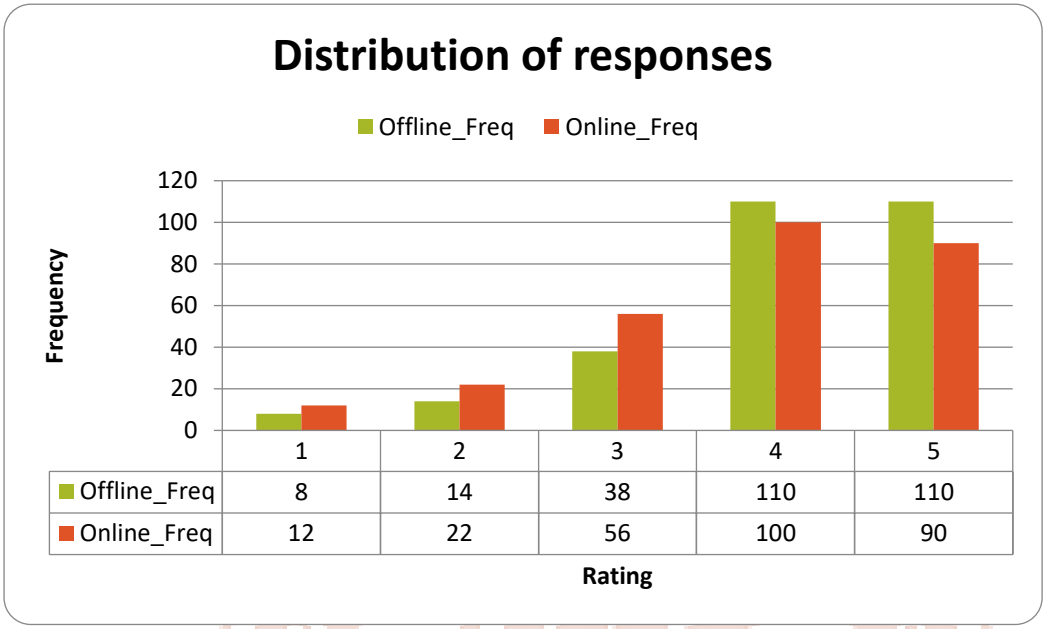
In terms of attractiveness, offline visual merchandising (4.3) also slightly surpasses Digital visual merchandising (4.1). This marginal difference indicates that while digital platforms have made significant advancements in visual presentation, physical stores continue to offer a more immersive and sensory-rich experience that enhances aesthetic appeal.

Conversely, Digital visual merchandising demonstrates a significantly higher mean score in convenience (4.5) compared to offline retail (3.8). This highlights the inherent advantage of Digital platforms in providing ease of access, time efficiency, and flexibility. Features such as 24/7 availability, quick product comparisons, and home delivery contribute to a seamless shopping experience, making Digital retail particularly appealing for routine or time-constrained purchases.

Despite these differences, the relatively close scores for purchase influence (offline: 4.2; Digital: 4.0) suggest that both forms of visual merchandising are effective in shaping consumer decisions, albeit through different mechanisms i.e. offline through experiential engagement and trust-building, and online through convenience and visual accessibility.

Overall, the clustered bar chart underscores the complementary nature of Digital and offline visual merchandising. While offline VM excels in establishing trust and emotional connection, online VM dominates in functional efficiency and convenience. These findings reinforce the need for retailers to adopt an integrated or omni-channel approach that leverages the strengths of both formats to enhance overall consumer experience and purchase outcomes.

Graph 4: Histogram – Distribution of Responses



	1	2	3	4	5
Offline_Freq	8	14	38	110	110
Online_Freq	12	22	56	100	90

Interpretation:

The histogram shows a normal distribution skewed towards higher ratings (4 and 5), indicating strong agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of offline visual merchandising.

The comparative examination of the histograms for Digital and offline visual merchandising reveals distinct patterns in the distribution of respondent perceptions. The histogram for offline visual merchandising exhibits a strong concentration of responses in the higher rating categories, particularly at values 4 and 5, indicating a high level of agreement regarding its effectiveness. The distribution appears slightly negatively skewed, reflecting the predominance of favourable evaluations and suggesting that respondents consistently perceive offline visual merchandising as influential in shaping purchase decisions.

In contrast, the histogram for Digital visual merchandising demonstrates a comparatively more dispersed distribution. While a substantial proportion of responses still falls within the higher rating categories, there is a noticeable spread across mid-range values, particularly at rating 3. This indicates a relatively more varied perception among respondents, suggesting that although Digital visual merchandising is generally viewed positively, its effectiveness is not as uniformly perceived as that of offline visual merchandising.

The comparative analysis highlights that offline visual merchandising generates greater consistency and stronger agreement among respondents, as evidenced by the tighter clustering of high scores. On the other hand, Digital visual merchandising reflects greater variability in

consumer perception, which may be attributed to factors such as lack of physical interaction, perceived risk, or differences in digital interface quality.

Overall, both distributions are positively inclined, confirming that visual merchandising, irrespective of format, plays a significant role in influencing consumer behaviour. However, the stronger concentration of high ratings in the offline histogram underscores its relatively greater impact in building trust and influencing purchase decisions, whereas the broader spread in the online histogram reflects a more balanced yet less intense influence.

7. Discussion

The results reinforce the theoretical understanding that physical retail environments provide stronger emotional and sensory engagement (Grewal et al., 2017). Offline VM benefits from tangible interaction, which enhances trust and reduces perceived risk.

Conversely, Digital VM leverages visual technology to offer convenience and accessibility. Features such as high-resolution images and videos compensate for the lack of physical interaction.

Thus, the findings suggest that both formats are complementary rather than competitive.

8. Conclusion

This study concludes that visual merchandising significantly impacts consumer buying behaviour in both online and offline contexts. While offline VM remains dominant in influencing trust and decision-making, Digital VM is increasingly preferred for its convenience and flexibility.

Retailers should adopt an integrated approach that combines physical and digital visual strategies to maximize consumer engagement.

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